

173.

A SHORT
ACCOUNT
OF THE
LIFE AND CONVERSION

OF THE
REV. JOHN BERRIDGE, M.A.
LATE VICAR OF EVERTON, BEDFORDSHIRE.

IN A
LETTER
FROM HIMSELF
TO A CLERGYMAN.

IN WHICH IS GIVEN,
A RELATION OF THE GREAT WORK OF GOD
AMONG Mr. BERRIDGE's PEOPLE.

FIRST PUBLISHED IN THE YEAR 1760.

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

An ELEGY written and published at his Death: and an
EPITAPH inscribed on his Tomb-Stone, written by himself.

HE WAS A BURNING AND A SHINING LIGHT.

JOHN V. 35.

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TO THE
R E A D E R.

THE following Letter was written by Mr. BERRIDGE to a Clergyman, in order to give him an account of what God had done for his soul.—Copies of it were taken, and handed about from one friend to another, till at last it was sent up to London, and two editions printed without the Author's consent, under the title of, “ A Fragment of the true Religion ;” however, a third edition was afterwards published with his leave: and as the memory of Mr. BERRIDGE is dear and precious to the children of God, it is presumed the re-publication of it will not be unacceptable to them—And that this publication may be the means of bringing others from the fatal error which Mr. BERRIDGE so long continued in, is the sincere desire and prayer of

The PUBLISHER.

Also just Published, the second Edition of

The last Farewell Sermon, preached at the Tabernacle, near Moorfields, April 1, 1792. By the Rev. John Berridge, M. A. Late Vicar of Everton, Bedfordshire. To which is added, a short Account of Mr. Berridge's Death, in a Letter from a Friend, who was with him the Day he died. Also a Narrative of the Respect shewed to him by his Friends in London. Price 6d.

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An Epitaph inscribed on the Tomb-stone of the Rev. Mr. Berridge, written by himself. Price One Halfpenny.



A
L E T T E R,

Ec. Ec. Ec.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

MY desire and intention, in this Letter, is to inform you what the Lord has lately done for my soul: in order to this, it may be needful to give you a little previous information of my manner of life, from my youth up to the present time.

When I was about the age of fourteen, God was pleased to shew me that I was a sinner, and that I must be born again before I could enter into his kingdom. Accordingly I betook myself to reading, praying and watching; and was enabled hereby to make some progress in sanctification*.

* It may be necessary, once for all, to desire the reader to recollect, that this Letter was written soon after Mr. Berridge was brought out of darkness and error; and therefore there is no wonder that we meet with some expressions which he himself, when his knowledge and experience came to more maturity, would not have used. This is one instance, where he speaks of making progress in sanctification, before, as he himself acknowledges, he had taken one step in the right road to heaven—whereas he soon after knew, that real sanctification was only the fruit and effect of union and communion with Christ, the life-giving Head of his people.

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In this manner I went on, though not always with the same diligence, till about half a year ago. I thought myself in the right way to heaven, though as yet I was wholly out of the way; and imagining I was travelling towards Sion, though I had never yet set my face thitherwards. Indeed, God would have shewn me that I was wrong, by not owning my ministry; but I paid no regard to this for a long time, imputing my want of success to the naughty hearts of my hearers, and not to my own naughty doctrine.

You may ask, perhaps, What was my doctrine? Why, dear Sir, it was the doctrine that every man will naturally hold whilst he continues in an unregenerate state, viz. That we are to be justified partly by our faith, and partly by our works. This doctrine I preached for six years at a curacy, which I served from college; and though I took some extraordinary pains, and pressed sanctification upon them very earnestly, yet they continued as un sanctified as before, and not one soul was brought to Christ. There was indeed a little more of the form of religion in the parish, but not a whit more of the power. At length I removed to Everton, where I have lived altogether. Here again I pressed sanctification and regeneration as vigorously as I could; but finding no success, after two years preaching in this manner, I began to be discouraged, and now some secret misgivings arose in my mind,

mind, that I was not right myself. (This happened about Christmas last.) Those misgivings grew stronger, and at last very painful. Being then under great doubts, I cried unto the Lord very earnestly. The constant language of my heart was this,—“ Lord, if I am right, keep me so; if I am not right, make me so. Lead me to the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus.”

After about ten days crying unto the Lord, he was pleased to return an answer to my prayers, and in the following wonderful manner. As I was sitting in my house one morning, and musing upon a text of scripture, the following words were darted into my mind with wonderful power, and seemed indeed like a voice from heaven, viz. “ Cease from thy own works.” Before I heard these words, my mind was in a very unusual calm; but as soon as I heard them, my soul was in a tempest directly, and the tears flowed from my eyes like a torrent. The scales fell from my eyes immediately, and I now clearly saw the rock I had been splitting on for near thirty years.

Do you ask what this rock was? Why, it was some secret reliance on my own works for salvation. I had hoped to be saved partly in my own name, and partly in Christ's name; though I am told there is salvation in no other name, except in the name of Jesus Christ, Acts, iv. 12.—I had hoped to be saved partly through my own works, and partly

partly through Christ's mercies; though I am told we are saved by grace through faith, and not of works, Eph. ii. 7. 8.—I had hoped to make myself acceptable to God partly through my own good works, though we are told, that we are accepted through the beloved, Eph. i. 6.—I had hoped to make my peace with God partly through my own obedience to his laws, though I am told, that peace is only to be had by faith, Rom. v. 1. I had hoped to make myself a child of God by sanctification, though we are told that we are made children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, Gal. iii. 26. I had thought that regeneration, the new new birth, or new creature, consisted in sanctification, but now I know it consists in faith, 1 John v. 1.—Compare also these two passages together, Gal. vi. 15. and Gal v. 6.—where you will find that the new creature is faith working by love: the apostle adds these words, *working by love*, in order to distinguish a living faith from a dead one. I had thought that sanctification was the way to justification, but now I am assured that sanctification follows after justification; or, in other words, that we must first be justified by faith, before we can have any true sanctification by the Spirit. When we are justified, it is done freely, *i. e.* graciously, without any the least merits of ours, and solely by the grace of God, through Jesus Christ, Rom. iii. 24—28.

All that is previously needful to justification is this, that we are convinced by the Spirit of God
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of our own utter sinfulness, Isa. ixiv. 6. convinced that we are children of wrath by nature; on account of our birth-sin, Eph. ii. 3.—and that we are under the curse of God, on account of actual sin, Gal. iii. 10.—and under these convictions come to the Lord Jesus Christ, renouncing all righteousness of our own, and relying solely on him, who is appointed to be the Lord our righteousness. Jer. xxiii. 6. Again, Christ says, *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden* (with the burden of sin) *and I will give you rest, i. e. I will take the burden away; I will release you from the guilt of sin.* Where you may observe that the only thing required of us when we come to Christ, is to come burdened and sensible that none can remove this burden but Christ. Again, Christ did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. See also Luke iv. 18. Hear how he cries out in Isaiah, lv. 1. *Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters and drink; come, buy wine and milk* (i. e. the blessings of the gospel) *without money and without price.* Where we are ordered to bring no money, i. e. no merits of our own; we must not think to make a purchase of these blessings by any deserts of ours. They are offered freely, i. e. graciously, and must be received freely. Nothing more is required from us, but to thirst after them. Why was the Pharisee rejected? (Luke xviii. 10, &c.) Because he came pleading his own works before God. He was devout, just, chaste, and abstemious; and thanked God for enabling him to be so. Very well; so far all was

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right. But then he had some reliance on these works, and therefore pleads the merits of them before God. Which shewed that he did not know what a sinner he was, and that he could only be saved by grace, through faith. He opens his mouth before God, and pleads his own cause; though God declares that every mouth shall be stopped before him, and the whole world brought in guilty before God. Rom. iii. 19.—And why was the publican justified? not on account of his own good works, but because he was sensible of his evil ones; and accordingly came self-accused, self-condemned, and crying out only for mercy.

And now, dear Sir, hear what is the rise and progress of true religion in the soul of man. When the Spirit of God has convinced any person that he is a child of wrath, and under the curse of God (in which state every one continues to be till he has received Jesus Christ into his heart by faith), then the heart of such an one becomes broken for sin; then, too, he feels what he never knew before, that he has no faith, and accordingly laments his evil heart of unbelief. In this state men continue, some a longer, some a less time, till God is pleased to work faith in them. Then they are justified, and are at peace with God, Rom. v. 1. *i. e.* have their sins forgiven them, for that is the meaning of the word *peace*. See Luke vii. 48—50. When we have received faith from God (for it is his gift, Ephes. ii. 8.) to justify our persons, then we afterwards receive the Spirit to sanctify

sanctify our natures, Ephes. i. 13. Gal. iii. 14. And now the work of sanctification goes forwards; now his fruit is more and more ūnto holiness; now the love of God is shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Spirit, Rom. v. 5. now he walks in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, Acts, ix. 13. now he is filled with joy and peace in believing, Rom. xv. 13. now he rejoiceth with joy unspeakable, and full of glory, 1 Pet. i. 8. And now he hath the Spirit of God bearing witness with his own spirit that he is a child of God, Rom. viii. 16. 1 John v. 10. These are things that I was an utter stranger to before, notwithstanding all my reading, watching, and praying; and these are things that every one must be a stranger to, 'till he is made a child of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

But to proceed; though a believer is continually more and more sanctified in body, soul and spirit, yet his hopes of heaven are not built on his sanctification, but on his faith in Christ; he knows that he is only compleat in Christ, Col. ii. 10. And that the moment he seeks to be justified by his own obedience to God's laws, that moment he falls from Christ, and ceases to have an interest in Christ, Gal. v. 4. Accordingly, though he labours to abound in all the fruits of righteousness, yet, like St. Paul, he desires to be found only in Christ, not having, *i. e.* not relying on his own righteousness, but on the righteousness of God by faith, Phil. iii. 8, 9.

And now let me point out to you the grand delusion which had like to have ruined my soul. I saw very early something of the unholiness of my nature, and the necessity of being born again. Accordingly I watched, prayed, and fasted too, thinking to purify my heart by these means, whereas it can only be purified by faith, Acts, xv. 9. Watching, praying, and fasting, are necessary duties, but I, like many others, placed some secret reliances on them, thinking they were to do that for me, in part at least, which Christ only could. The truth is, though I saw myself to be a sinner, and a great sinner, yet I did not see myself an utter lost sinner, and therefore I could not come to Jesus Christ alone to save me; I despised the doctrine of justification by faith alone, looking on it as a foolish and a dangerous doctrine; I was not yet stripped of all my righteousness, could not consider it all as filthy rags, and therefore I went about to establish a righteousness of my own, and did not submit to the righteousness of God by faith, Rom. x. 3.—I did not seek after righteousness through faith, but as it were by the works of the law. Thus I stumbled and fell, Rom. ix. 31, 32.—In short, to use a homely similitude, I put the justice of God into one scale, and as many good works of my own as I could into the other; and when I found, as I always did, my own good works not to be a balance to the divine justice, I then threw in Christ as a make-weight. And this every one really does, who
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hopes for salvation partly by doing what he can for himself, and then relying on Christ for the rest.

But, dear Sir, Christ will either be a whole Saviour or none at all. And if you think you have any good service of your own to recommend you unto God, you are certainly without any interest in Christ: be you ever so sober, serious, just and devout, you are still under the curse of God, as I was, and know it not, provided you have any allowed reliance on your own works, and think they are to do something for you, and Christ to do the rest.

I now proceed to acquaint you with the success I have lately had in my ministry. As soon as God had opened my own eyes, and shewed me the true way to salvation, I began immediately to preach it. And now I dealt with my hearers in a very different manner from what I used to do. I told them very plainly, that they were children of wrath, and under the curse of God, though they knew it not; and that none but Jesus Christ could deliver them from that curse. I asked them, if they had ever broke the law of God once in thought, word, or deed? If they had, they were then under the curse: for it is written, *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all the things that are written in the book of the law to do them.* And again: *He that keepeth the whole law, and yet offendeth in one point, is guilty of all.* If, indeed, we could keep the whole law, without offending in one point;
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if we had done, and could continue to do, all the things in God's law, then, indeed, we might lay claim to eternal life on the score of our own works. But who is sufficient for these things? If we break God's law, we immediately fall under the curse of it; and none can deliver us from this curse but Jesus Christ. There is an end, for ever after, of any justification from our own works. No future good behaviour can make any atonement for past miscarriages. If I keep all God's laws to-day, this is no amends for breaking them yesterday. If I behave peaceably to my neighbour this day, it is no satisfaction for having broke his head yesterday.

If, therefore, I am once under the curse of God, for having broken God's law, I can never after do any thing, of myself, to deliver me from this curse. I may then cry out, *O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of sin?* and find none able to deliver, but Jesus Christ, Rom. vii. 23, 24, 25. So that if I am once a sinner, nothing but the blood of Jesus Christ can cleanse me from sin. All my hopes are then in him; and I must fly to him as the only refuge set before me.

In this manner, dear Sir, I preached, and do preach, to my flock, labouring to beat down self-righteousness; labouring to shew them that they were all in a lost and perishing state, and that nothing could recover them out of this state, and
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make them children of God, but faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And now see the consequence. This was strange doctrine to my hearers. They were surprised, alarmed, and vexed. The old man, the carnal nature, was stirred up, and railed, and opposed the truth. However, the minds of most were seized with some convictions, and the hearts of some were truly broken for sin, so that they came to me as those mentioned in the Acts, thoroughly pricked to the heart, and crying out, with strong and bitter cries, *What must we do to be saved?* I then laid the promises before them, and told them, if they found themselves under the curse, Christ was ready to deliver them from it; if they were really weary and heavy laden, Christ would give them rest; if their hearts were broken for sin, and they would look up unto Christ, he would heal them. I exhorted them also to thank God for these convictions, assuring them it was a token of good to their souls. For God must first smite the heart, before he can heal it, Isa. xix. 21. I generally found that they received comfort from the promises; and though they complained much of the burden of sin, and of an evil heart of unbelief, yet they always went away refreshed and comforted. Many have come unto me in this manner, and more are continually coming; and though some fall off from their first convictions, yet others cleave stedfastly unto the Lord. They begin to rejoice in him, and to love him; they love his word, and meditate much upon it; they exercise

exercise themselves in prayer, and adorn their profession by a suitable life and conversation.

And now let me make one reflection. I preached up sanctification * very earnestly for six years in a former parish, and never brought one soul to Christ. I did the same at this parish for two years, without any success at all; but as soon as ever I preached Jesus Christ, and faith in his blood, then believers were added to the church continually; then people flocked from all parts to hear the glorious sound of the gospel, some coming six miles, others eight, and others ten, and that constantly.

And now let me ask, What is the reason why my ministry was not blessed, when I preached up salvation partly by faith, and partly by works? It is because this doctrine is not of God; and he will prosper no ministers but such as preach salvation in his own appointed way, viz. by faith in Jesus Christ.

Let me now apply myself to your own heart, and may God dispose you to receive my words in the spirit of meekness. Indeed, Sir, I love and respect you, else I could not have wrote to you so freely. Are you, then, in the same error that I was in for near forty years, viz. that you must be saved partly by faith and partly by works? And have

* By the works of the law, he means.

you constantly preached this doctrine? Then you may be certainly assured of these two things: First That you never yet brought one soul to Christ by your ministry. And, secondly, That you are not yet in the way to salvation yourself. Oh! be not displeased with me for telling you the truth.

But you will say, perhaps, that you have not only been sincere, but ever zealous in preaching the word of God. So was I; but there is a zeal which is not according to knowledge; and that zeal I had, though I knew it not. You may say farther, that you have read and prayed much; so have I; but still I knew nothing as I ought to know, 'till God was pleased to shew me that I was blind, and then I cried heartily to him for light and direction, and he opened mine eyes, John ix. 39.

Dear Sir, will you attend to the following advice, it is very safe advice, be the state of your soul what it will. Pray to God to lead you into the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus. Beseech God to keep you in the truth, if you have received it; or if you are in error, to reveal it unto you. If you will do this heartily and constantly, God will not suffer you to abide long in darkness, if indeed you are in darkness, James, i. 5.

I now proceed to give you some further account of myself, and of the impediments which kept me

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from the truth. When I first came to the university, I applied myself diligently to my studies, thinking human learning to be a necessary qualification for a Divine, and that no one ought to preach unless he had taken a degree in the university. Accordingly I studied the classics, mathematics, philosophy, logic, metaphysics, and read the works of our most eminent divines; and this I did for twenty years; and all the while was departing more and more from the truth as it is in Jesus; vainly hoping to receive that light and instruction from human wisdom, which could only be had from the word of God and prayer.

During this time I was thought a Methodist by some people, only because I was a little more grave, and took a little more pains in my ministry than some others of my brethren; but in truth I was no Methodist at all, for I had no sort of acquaintance with them, and could not abide their fundamental doctrine of justification by faith, and thought it high presumption in any to preach, unless they had taken holy orders. But when God was pleased to open my eyes, about half a year ago, he shewed and taught me other things. Now I saw that nothing had kept me so much from the truth, as a desire of human wisdom. Now I perceived, that it was as difficult for a wise or learned man to be saved, as it was for a rich man or a nobleman, 1 Cor. i. 26. Now I saw that God chose the foolish things of this world, to confound the
wise,

wife, for two plain reasons; 1st, That no flesh should glory in his presence, 1 Cor. i. 29. and, 2dly, That faith did not stand, or was not produced, by the wisdom of man, but by the power of God, 1 Cor. ii. 5. Now I discerned, that no one could understand the word of God, but by the Spirit of God, 1 Cor. ii. 12. Now I saw that every believer was anointed by the Holy Spirit, and thereby led to the knowledge of all needful truths, 1 John ii. 20. and of course that every true believer was qualified to preach the gospel, provided he had the gift of utterance. Now I saw that the Methodists doctrine of justification by faith, was the very doctrine of the gospel; and I did no longer wonder at the success which those preachers met with, whether they were clergymen or laymen. They preached Christ's doctrine, and Christ owned it; so that many were added to the faith daily.

But you will say, perhaps, that these Methodists are schismatics. Let us therefore examine the matter. A schismatic is one that dissents and divides from an established church; at least this is the general notion of a schismatic. Now I ask, What do you mean by a church; or what is it that makes one church to differ from another? It is the doctrine. The church of England differs from the church of Rome, not by its steeples, bells, or vestments, but by its doctrines. Schism, therefore, consists in departing from the doctrines of a church, and not from the walls of a church. In the time of Stirbitch fair, one sermon is always

preached in the open fields to the people at the fair, and preached by some Fellow of a college, or clergyman at Cambridge. Now I ask, would you call this clergyman a schismatic? No, surely, and yet he preaches in the open fields, and upon unconsecrated ground. It is plain, then, that schism doth not consist in preaching out of the walls of a church, but in preaching contrary to the doctrines of the church.

And now, dear Sir, let me lay open my sin and my shame unto you. I solemnly subscribed to the articles of our church; and gave my hearty assent and consent to them. Amongst the rest, I declared, that "We are accounted righteous before God, only for the merits of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by faith, and not for our own works or deservings, and that we are justified by faith only," as it is expressed in the eleventh article. But though I solemnly subscribed this article, I neither believed nor preached it: but preached salvation partly by faith and partly by works. And oh, what dreadful hypocrisy, what shameful prevarication was this! I called and thought myself a churchman, though I was really a dissenter and a schismatic; for I was undermining the fundamental doctrine of our church, and the fundamental doctrine of the gospel, namely, justification by faith only, and yet, dreadful as my case was, I fear it is the case of most of the clergy in England. Scarce any thing is preached but justification by faith and works. And what is the conse-

consequence? Why, there is scarce any true religion amongst us, the gospel of Christ is not truly preached by us, and Christ will not own our ministry. Look around the parishes which are near you, and see whether you can find any thing besides the form of religion, and not much of that. Nay, amongst those who are thought religious people; who are sober, serious, just and devout; who read, and fast, and pray, and give alms; amongst those you will scarce find one who knows any thing of the power of religion, and has experimental knowledge of it. For if you ask such people, in the very words of Scripture, whether they know that Jesus Christ is in them, otherwise they are reprobates, 2 Cor. xiii. 5. whether Christ dwells in their hearts by faith, Eph. iii. 17. whether their sins are forgiven for Christ's name's sake, 1 John, ii. 12. whether they have received an unction from the holy one, 1 John ii. 20. whether the love of God has been shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost, Rom. v. 5. whether they are filled with joy and peace in believing, Rom. xv. 13. whether they walk in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, and do ever rejoice, with joy unspeakable and full of glory, Acts, ix. 31. 1 Pet. i. 8. and lastly, whether the Holy Spirit bears witness with their own spirit that they are the children of God, Rom. viii. 14, 15, 16. If, I say, you ask the better sort amongst us, whether they have any experience of these matters, they would

would stare at you with the utmost amazement, and would think you an enthusiast, if they did not call you so.

Now such people who have all the form, but none of the power of religion; who are outwardly reformed, but not inwardly renewed by the Holy Ghost; these are what our Saviour calls whited sepulchres, beautiful without, but full of rottenness within. They are striving to enter into the kingdom of heaven, but are not able: because they do not strive lawfully. For they do not seek to enter in through Jesus Christ, but partly through Christ, and partly through themselves; partly by faith, and partly by works. These are the almost, but not altogether Christians. And if at any time it happens, that some amongst us are seized with deep conviction, and are made sensible of their utter need of Christ, and that they can only be justified by faith in his blood; these people not finding proper food for their souls in our churches, are obliged to go elsewhere, and seek it where they can find it. It is no wonder, therefore, that there are so few real Christians amongst us.

If you read over the homilies of the church, if you read over the fathers of the church, if you read the works of the good old bishops that were published an hundred years ago, you will there find the gospel of Christ preached, and the true doctrine of our own church. But since that time, I mean in the last century, our clergy have been
gradually

gradually departing more and more from our doctrines, articles, and homilies; so that at length there was scarce a clergyman to be found, but who preached contrary to the articles he subscribed. And almost all the sermons that have been published in the last century, both by bishops and curates, are full of that soul-destroying doctrine, that we are to be justified partly by our own works, and partly by Christ's merits.

Do you ask how all the clergy came to fall into this pernicious doctrine? I answer, very easily. Every man, whilst he continues under the power of the carnal mind, and is not awakened to see his utter lost condition, is naturally disposed to embrace this doctrine. For not being yet convinced by the Spirit of God, that all his righteousness is as filthy rags; Isa. lxiv. 6. and that he is without help and strength in himself, Rom. v. 6. I say, not being convinced of this, he naturally goes about to establish some righteousness of his own, and cannot submit to the righteousness of God by faith. Not being yet sensible of his utter lost and helpless state, he must have some reliance on himself: and thus, instead of looking wholly to Jesus Christ for salvation, he looks partly to Christ, and partly to himself: instead of seeking for righteousness and strength from the Lord Jesus Christ, he seeks for it partly from Christ, and partly from himself: instead of seeking to be justified in the Lord, he seeks after justification partly through
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the Lord, and partly through himself. But see what Christ saith of this matter, Isa. xlv. 22, 23, 24, 25.

And now let me ask how the whole church of Rome happened to depart from the simplicity of the gospel, and to fall into this doctrine of works and faith which we now preach? It was owing to the depraved nature of man, which makes him think himself to be something, and that he can do something, though he is nothing, and can do nothing to justify himself in God's sight.

At the Reformation, our church returned again to Jesus Christ, and placed justification on the gospel footing of faith only. And so it continues to this day: but though our articles and homilies continue sound and evangelical, yet our clergy have departed once more from both, and are advancing to Rome again with hasty strides; preaching, in spite of articles and subscription, that most pernicious, papistical, and damnable doctrine of justification by faith and works. Which doctrine, I am verily assured, no one can hold, and be in a state of salvation.—But I trust God is once more visiting, in mercy, our poor distressed church. He raised up Mr. Whitefield and Mr. Wesley about twenty years ago, who have courageously and successfully preached up the doctrine of our church. And he is now daily raising up more and more clergymen. At Christmas last, I was informed, there were forty clergymen who were brought to the acknowledgment

ledgement of the truth; and three more have been added to the faith within the last six weeks. And oh! for ever adored be the mercy of God in opening my eyes, and leading me to the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus.

I have sent you a couple of books, and a pamphlet, and I make you a present of them. Read them over carefully. And before you begin to read at any time, always look up to the fountain of wisdom for light and direction. For if you rely on your own abilities, or other men's labours, God may keep you ignorant of his glorious gospel, as a punishment for your presumption and neglect of him.

When I sat down to write, I did not intend to have filled more than half a sheet, but when I took my pen in hand, I knew not how to lay it aside. I have wrote my sentiments with great freedom, and I hope without offence. May God give a blessing to what I have wrote: may he enlighten your eyes, as he hath done mine, adored be his mercy: may he lead you by his Spirit to the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus: and make you instrumental in bringing souls from darkness into light, and translating them out of the kingdom of Satan into the glorious kingdom of his dear Son. Amen, Amen.

Everton,
July 3. 1758.

THE following Letter having been in possession of the Publisher for many Years, he begs leave to subjoin it here; not doubting but the Insertion of it will gratify many of its Author's admirers.—It was written by Mr. BERRIDGE to the COUNTESS OF HUNTINGDON.

MADAM,

THURSDAY I received a bill, conveyed by Mrs. ———, but presented by your Ladyship, which was immediately converted into cloth for the use of lay-preachers; and for this donation I have sent you my hearty thanks; the Lord has promised to return it a hundred fold into your bosom; and I believe you can trust him. I wish you had sent along with it a few minutes of your life of faith; you might then have taught me, whilst you was clothing others: for indeed I am one of those strange folk, who set up for journey-men, without knowing their business; and offer many precious wares to sell, without understanding their full value.

I have

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I have got to mention of a most extraordinary person whom I am supposed to be well acquainted with, because he employs me as a Riding Pedlar, to serve near forty shops in the country, besides my own parish: yet I know much less of my Master than of his wares; often is my tongue describing him as the fairest of men, whilst my heart is painting him as the witch of Endor; and many big words have I spoke of his credit: yea, I am often beseeching others to trust their all with him, whilst my own heart has been afraid to trust him with a groat. Neither, Madam, is this all; such a profound ignoramus I am, that I know nothing of myself as I ought to know; having often mistaken rank pride for deep humility, and the working of self-love for the love of Jesus.

When my master first hired me into his service, he kept a brave table, and was wondrous free of his liquors: scarce a meal past without roast meat and claret: then my heart said, "I love Jesus," and was ready to boast of it too. But at length he ordered his table to be spread with meat from above, and water out of the rock: this my saucy stomach could not bear: my heart thought it pernicious food; and my tongue called it light food. Now my love for Jesus disappeared; and I found I had followed him, as yet, only for loaves and fishes, and loved his cellar and larder better than his person.

Presently my Master detected me in a very dirty trick, which discovered huge pride, and amazing

impudence of my heart. Hitherto I had been a stranger to the livery my Master gave his servants; only I knew he had many rarities, such as pearls and diamonds, and a plenty to dispose of: accordingly I begged a bracelet of him, a necklace and ear-rings, a nose-bell, and other pretty things, which he readily parted with, being of a most exceeding generous nature. And will it not amaze you, to hear I had the vanity to set these ornaments on my old rags; intending thereby to make a birth-suit to appear in at court? Well, to be sure, while I was busy mending my old rags, and putting on my pearls, in comes my Master, and giving a sudden grin, which went to my very heart, said, with an angry tone, "Varlet, follow me;" I arose, and followed him trembling, whilst he led me to the house of correction, where he first set my feet fast in the stocks, and stripped me of my ornaments; he then took his rods, and laid about me very stoutly, I cried for mercy, but he declared that he should not lay aside the rod, till he had scourged every rag from my back. And indeed he was as good as his word. Think how amazed and confounded I must be, to stand naked before my Master, and especially when I first saw myself a leopard, with an Ethiopian skin, which the rags had concealed from me before. For a while I kept on my legs, yet quite overwhelmed with my shame, till at length, being choaked with the dust and stench that came out of the rags, in beating, I fell down at my Master's feet, and immediately the
rod

rod dropped out of his hands. His countenance softened, and with a sweet voice he bid me look up: I did; and then I got a fresh sight of his priestly robe, the garment of salvation. Think, Madam, was it not a lovely sight! a charming robe! reaching from the shoulders down to the feet! well adapted for covering and defence; yea, excellent for beauty and glory. "There, prodigal Jack, (he said with a smile) put this on thy back, and then thou mayest shame an angel: it was wrought with my own hand, and dyed with my own blood; wear it, and embrace me." I thanked him, and bowed.

But, Madam, I must tell you, although I do not desire you to be a confidant, when my master opened his robe, he gave me a hasty glance of his person: it was divinely sweet and glorious, and withal so exceedingly humane, that I fell in love: and now would you think it of me, old fool as I am, and swarthy as a negroe, nothing will content me but a wedding! Nay, I have often proposed a match to my Master; who sometimes replies, when I can leave all others, he will take me. The other day, having asked him when he would take me to his bosom; he answered, when I could lay at his feet; and then he has also promised to set open his cellar and larder, and keep them open.

I am now removed out of the book of Proverbs, where I have long stayed, into the book of Canti-

Canticles; but have gone no farther than the 1st chap. and 2d ver. "Let him kiss me with the
 "kisses of his mouth." I seem now to want nothing but a close communion with the dear Redeemer. The world, at times, seems to divert my attention from the chief object; but my soul is ever panting after him. Yea, my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God, that he may come quickly.

The Lord strengthen your union and communion with the Prince of peace. Amen.

A N E L E G Y

ON THE
MUCH LAMENTED DEATH
OF THE

Rev. JOHN BERRIDGE,

LATE VICAR OF EVERTON, NEAR
POTTON, IN BEDFORDSHIRE.

Who departed this Life on TUESDAY, JANUARY 22,
1793, about Three in the Afternoon.

Know ye not, that a great man is fallen this day in Israel ?

2 Sam. iii. 38.

Behold, an Israelite indeed ! John i. 47.

WHAT melliferous sounds are these I hear,
Swiftly floating thro' the ambient air ?

It is the note of pure seraphic fire,
Sweetly hailing our much honour'd Sire.

Around his Angel kindred spirits fly,
To know his name, as he approaches nigh.

BERRIDGE, he says, was late my earthly name,
A fetter-forth of our dear Saviour's fame.

But stay me not, with eagerness he cries :

I long to see him with immortal eyes ;

Him who erst I feebly preach'd below ;

Him to whom the Gentile nations flow ;

JESUS, my KING, my SAVIOUR, and my GOD ;

David's Root, yet of Jesse's stem a Rod.

Hark !—His voice !—He calls me to his throne !

When,

When, lo! a sudden glory round him shone.
 The Saviour comes, and takes him to his arms :
 His soul o'erpow'rs with his salvific charms.
 Stay, dear LORD, this is too much, he cries,
 My portion's at thy feet, where Mary lies :
 Less than the least of all the saints confest :
 In thee and thou alone I'm only blest.

As he liv'd, thus died this Man of GOD :
 Humbly in IMMANUEL's steps he trod.
 In him a friend thro' all the country round,
 The poor, the naked, and the hungry found.
 His fellow-lab'ers feel his fost'ring care ;
 Take his advice, his patrimony share.
 Oft he petitioned others as their friend ;
 Yet in all, CHRIST's glory was his aim, his end.
 He envied not, he courted no applause :
 His heart was only in his SAVIOUR's cause.
 His life was inoffensive, meek and mild :
 In manners sweet, in simplicity a child.
 He in his public character set forth
 The SAVIOUR's fulness, and intrinsic worth ;
 Laid low the sinner, CHRIST exalted high :
 He learn'd erroneous doctrines to decry.
 As his Gospel lyre was by the SPIRIT strung,
 The faint, the sinner, on his accents hung ;
 They both return'd, musing on the pleasing theme,
 Convinc'd that all beside was but a dream.
 Many call'd him Father, while on earth,
 As instrumental in their second birth.

These

These were his words as on his bed he lay,
 —“ Yes ; and my children too will shout and say,
 “ Here comes our Father,” from his labours freed,
 Rejoicing in the woman’s conqu’ring Seed.

His theme was Grace ; Free Grace was his delight ;
 The SPIRIT’s teaching, and the SPIRIT’s might ;
 The Persons, FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST,
 Ador’d by saints, and all the heav’nly host,
 Th’ eternal self-existent ONE in THREE,
 Whose pow’r’s supreme, whose love is full and free.



A N E P I T A P H

INSCRIBED ON THE

T O M B - S T O N E

OF THE

Rev. J O H N B E R R I D G E,

LATE VICAR OF EVERTON, NEAR POTTON,
IN BEDFORDSHIRE.

WRITTEN BY HIMSELF.

Here lies

The earthly Remains of

J O H N B E R R I D G E,

Late Vicar of EVERTON,

And an Itinerant Servant of JESUS CHRIST,

Who loved his Master, and his Work ;

And, after running on his Errands many Years,
was caught up to wait on him above.

Reader !

Art thou born again ?

No Salvation without a NEW BIRTH.

I was born in Sin, FEBRUARY 1716.

Remained ignorant of my fallen State till 1730.

Lived proudly on Faith and Works for Salvation
till 1754.

Admitted to EVERTON Vicarage 1755.

Fled to JESUS alone for Refuge 1756.

Fell asleep in CHRIST JANUARY 22, 1793.

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